Harbor of Civita Vecchia. Tuesday 28th
7th May, 3. P.M.

Here I am again, on the deck of the Francesco Primo covered by an awning to protect from the sun, and enjoying a delicious sea-breeze. I suppose I have at least an hour before the actual sailing of the boat, which time I must improve by writing as fast as possible.

I think I have still to give you some account of my movements on Saturday and Monday. Our chief occupation on Saturday was to finish the Collections of the Vatican. We had seen the frescoes, the Library, the Chapels &c — on Friday. To-day we now passed through the immense museum of sculpture, beginning with a gallery of ancient inscriptions, half a mile long almost, the blocks of marble containing the inscriptions being let into the wall. Nearly the whole of one side of the gallery is covered with fragments of monumental inscriptions of the early Christians, and I was interested to notice the absence of all figures of the cross, and as far as I could see, all reference to the Virgin Mary or any of the superstitions of Popery.

We then passed through the galleries of sculpture, which are beautiful beyond conception, and of an extent which almost surpasses comprehension. The two Masterpieces, as every body knows, are the Belvidere Apollo and the group of Laocoon and his children destroyed by serpents. Prodigiously fine as these are, yet I must say that they did not affect me so much as the Dying Gladiator, perhaps because I saw that first, but I think it is superior to every thing else. Mr Hartley, I observed, was more struck with the Belvidere Apollo than the others; and fine indeed it is the very perfection of grace and manly beauty. Yet I think, (or thought at first view, for it grows upon you on a second visit) the description in Childe Harold is over wrought, which in the case of the Gladiator is not at all. In part however it is true: notwithstanding its great age it appears almost as fresh as if just from the hands of the sculptor. It is at least 2000 years old! Yet

Time himself has hallowed it, nor laid
One wingéd in the dust — nor hath it caught
A tinge of years, but breathes the flame with which 'twas wrought.

But the group of Laocoon is itself worth coming to Rome to see. The Prints give you but a remote idea of its expression.

"Laocoon's torture dignifying pain —
A father's love and mortal's agony
With an immortal's patience blending: — vain
The struggle; vain, against the coiling strain
And gripe, and deepening of the dragon's grasp,
The old man's clench; the long envenomed chain
Rivets the living links, — the enormous asp
Enforces pang on pang, and stifles gasp on gasp."

Having once seen the statue, this stanza conveys a vivid idea of its character and expression.

There are at least twenty other groups or figures of the highest excellence which I would like just to mention, but the time fails, and the bare enumeration would be only tedious.

And then such fine vases, one of which, of porphyry (as basin) is 41 feet in circumferance — and then baths of granite, marble, or porphyry, of beautiful finish and immense size; the large Egyptian Museum also, much richer than that of Paris, and exceeding that of the British Museum also, except in Sarcophagi, and large Sphynxes. — But enough. — After dinner we took a stroll through the city, and returning by the Pantheon just after dark, we had a fine view of it, especially the interior, dimly lighted by the reflexion from the sky through the great opening of the dome.

On Sunday we had service in the English Chapel, a large and commodious room, situated just without the gate of the Porto del' Popolo. The door was guarded by the Pope's soldiers, whether to protect the protestants or to see that none of his own flock found their way there, I know not. The appearance of the clergyman, or rather his manner struck both Mr. Hartley and myself as quite conceited, and we were agreeably surprised to hear a faithful and scriptural sermon from him from the text "My grace is sufficient for thee".

In a walk I took just at evening I saw the Sacred

Stair-case of which you have heard, and witnessed the most degrading and revolting ~~superstitions~~ superstition, which I will give you some account of another time, as well as of the procession of monks to St. Giovanni Laterano. The crowd on board, and the continual jogging renders it next to impossible to write. So hasten me to Monday.

I went first to the Church of the Capuccins to see the famous picture of Michael and the chained Dragon, by Guido, of which I had previously seen a Mosaic in St. Peters. I have a fine engraving of it. The head of the Dragon is said to be the portrait of a Pope, (Urban XII I believe) with whom Guido was offended. Then I visited the Palazzo Pontifico on the Quirinal hill; a very large palace where the Pope lives during a part of the summer; saw all the rooms, many pictures by great Masters, some most beautiful Gobelin tapestry, one of which representing the Martyrdom of Stephen was exceedingly striking as a picture, and so beautifully executed that you could not imagine it to be otherwise than a painting. In one room there are several prints and designs of Catholic chapels in different parts of the world, sent doubtless by the priests to flatter his Holiness. Among them I saw a drawing of the Catholic church at Philadelphia, made to look as grand as possible.

(Leghorn, Wednesday Morning)

From a terrace, highly elevated on one side of this palace I had a most perfect panoramic view of the greater part of the city, finer than that from the Vatican, which is at the opposite side of the town. I did not ascend the dome of St. Peters, as I found it would require a special order from one of the Popes Ministers, and I did not care enough about it to take the trouble necessary for procuring the order. After leaving this palace, and looking into several churches I went again to the Vatican, this afternoon being the time when the Museums were thrown open to the public. My principal object was to see the collection of easel pictures, which is not large, but contains several of the very best, particularly all the finest works of Raphael in oil, many of Guido's &c. The Transfiguration of Raphael is esteemed the finest.

This I knew pretty well from the Prints (of which I have a fine copy) and the Mosaic in St. Peters; and it is a wonderful performance. You wonder how a painting executed more than three hundred years ago retains its perfect freshness. After satisfying my curiosity here I passed again through the rooms which contain Raphael's celebrated Frescoes (which have been a good deal injured) and then took another walk through the immense galleries of Antiquities, took a parting view of the Laocoon and the Apollo Belvidere and left the Vatican. I then entered St. Peters, took another look at all the finest objects, the famous Lions of Canova, the wonderful Mosaics, the magnificent dome, and very much more than I have time to tell you about. I saw again what Hartley & myself had noticed with pain and indignation, the bronze statue of St. Peter which is worshipped; at any time of the day you notice a continual throng coming to kiss the toes of the statue, and what affected us most of all, parents bringing their children and teaching them to kneell before it; then raising them in their arms to kiss the foot of the idol. What renders it the more ridiculous, if it were not too sad a view for ridicule is that the statue, according to their accounts is made of the fragments of one of Jupiter which stood originally in the Capitol. But it is strongly suspected that this is the identical heathen statue, a little modernized. You have often heard the story of the foot being worn away by this continual kissing, and I can confirm the account. The foot which projects over the pedestal is actualy worn away by the lips of these devotees ~~so that the~~ quite down to the origin of the toes, as also is the sandal beneath, — about three inches of solid bronze! They possess to have the body of St. Peter there also, and the stair-case, the doors of gilded bronze just before the high altar which lead to his tomb are magnificent. It is lighted by a hundred lamps or more which are kept burning continually.

They are fast spoiling the appearance of the interior of St. Peters, for a time, by the preparations that are making for a great ceremonial that is to take place toward the end of this month, and which is expected to draw and retain

great crowds at Rome. The Pope has wisely fixed the time at a season when, but for some such attraction the strangers have mostly left Rome, so that it will be all clear gain to him, as he gets directly or indirectly, a considerable portion of all the money left here by travellers. I have not told you what this ceremony is which, according to their accounts is to exceed in magnificence anything which has been seen in Rome since the Pope has been the ruler. It is the Canonization of three new Saints!!! The candidates for Saintship it seems must have been dead at least a hundred years, and the clearest proof must be brought that they have wrought a half-a-dozen miracles! I have not taken the trouble to enquire what the miracles are which these neophytes have wrought, although figures are now being put up in St. Peters to illustrate them. Notice that all three of these saints (or at least two) are Italians, which shows how much better Italy is than all the world besides, and the expense of Canonization is to be defrayed by the governments to which they respectively belong, — the Neapolitan, Vs — so that all is clear gain to the Pope. They are catainly making most expensive preparations in St. Peters, which is to be illuminated throughout, and these illuminations are said to be the most magnificent that can be conceived.

But I must close these sheets. I left Rome after midnight, ~~Tuesday evening~~ about one o'clock Tuesday morning, reached Civita Vecchia a little after mid-day, wrote an hour or two (as you see) after I got on board the boat, which was crowded with passengers, mostly English, from Naples, so that it was not easy to secure a mattress ~~to sleep on~~ to sleep on. We arrived at Leghorn about 9 o'clock this (Wednesday Morning) found there was a ship for New York lying in the bay, went on board, returned, took a clerk who volunteered his services from Grant & Co. the Bankers here, and went to fulfil one of your commissions by buying two fine hats for you. I have had experience enough to know that the Italians, shopkeepers and almost all beside, are most thorough-faced rogues, and in regard to anything of which you do not know the proper price you are sure to be made to pay more than you ought. I took this clerk who speaks good English, in order to be sure to get a proper article at a fair price. But after all I think it exceedingly probable that I have been made to pay a large price.

They are more costly than I supposed, but probably cheaper than those of the same quality could be bought at New York. I send you two, one no. 60, and another 64, which I think will please you. They will go by the Ship Sarah & Cecilia, which is to sail in about a week. I send at the same time a large roll of Prints, bought mostly at Rome, of which please take good care. The Engravings from the Great Masters cannot be replaced in the United States. I direct both parcels to Dr. Torrey, but for fear you may all be out of town in June-July - I enclose the bill of lading to John Casey and ask him to get them through the Custom House. I am to be off after dinner to Florence, about 50 miles, when I expect to arrive early in the morning. So that on Thursday evening I may expect to sleep in a bed, which I have not done since Monday. I shall pass most rapidly through Florence, Bologna, Padua & Venice, and hope very soon to be at Vienna. I feel in a great hurry to get home again, and have arranged to shorten my tour on the Continent considerably. You may imagine how anxious I am to hear from you. Not a word, even indirectly from America since I left Marseilles. No letters since my first arrival at Paris!

It is very warm here, but the summits of the Mountains that flank the bay are white with snow, which full in view while you are incommoded with heat is queer. I had a fine view of them from the bay of the coast of Corsica was also in view quite distinctly the higher peaks above the clouds. A long line I suspect on account of unusual refraction in the atmosphere. I am in most vigorous health, but am tanned by continual exposure to the sun to so dark a tint that you would be horrified to see me!

Love to all, the dear girls especially, and Herbert. Tell dear Dr. Th. that I will write him specially from Vienna, if an opportunity of sending occurs.

Ever most faithfully Yours

A. Gray